
A class path is defined by use of an environment variable called `ClassPath`.

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ClassPath is used to define the order and places to search for classes when in an execution environment and in development environments. A class locator service, known as JPS, or the Java Package Service, exposes an API which describes the class path as a single class source, with methods such as `FindClass` and `EnumClasses` regardless of the current configuration of the class path. These methods find all classes with a given name in all or a specified package, and enumerate all classes of given name respectively. However, they currently search through all the classes identified by the class path. When a JPS instance is created, it is initialized with a list of class path elements. For each element, a root object is created which represents the contents of the element. This object exposes an interface called `IRoot`, which has simple class location/enumeration methods, such as `DoesClassExist`, `GetClass`, and `EnumClasses`, each of which do what their names imply. Depending on the type of the element, a different implementation of a root object is created. For directory elements, a direct root object is created, whose `IRoot` method implementations result in direct searches of the root's underlying file system directory. For other elements, a root implementation that performs caching is created.
